United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Continuing visit to Republic of Korea, Secretary-General meets with President Kim Young Sam; meets also with Chairman of Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee, National Assembly leaders and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

+ General Assembly President says 48th session of Assembly has seen "happy coincidence of events that auger well for the future", citing examples such as developments in South Africa, Palestine-Israel accords and GATT signing.

+ Security Council last night authorized deployment of up to 50 additional military observers to United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, to monitor situation and report on efforts to promote political settlement of conflict there.

+ Fifth Committee last night approved $2,6 billion in appropriations for United Nations regular budget for 1994-1995 biennium; also approved drafts on financing of 17 peace-keeping operations in first quarter of 1994.

+ At least 20 nations face serious food shortages in 1994 FAO says in latest analysis of world food situation; 790 million people in developing countries, including 190 million children, said to be chronically undernourished.

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Continuing his official visit to the Republic of Korea (ROK) today, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met in the afternoon with President Kim Young Sam. According to a United Nations spokesman, they discussed the Secretary-General's forthcoming visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the difficulties between the two countries and the current negotiations between the DPRK and the United States. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said that his trip was on his own initiative, without a mandate, aimed at assisting

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and encouraging the negotiation process. He stressed his belief that failure to resolve the question of the DPRK's nuclear weapon capability could endanger the renewal in 1995 of the Nuclear Non-Profileration Treaty.

Earlier in the day, the Secretary-General met with Chung Jae Moon, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee and Secretary-General of the National Assembly, and with other Assembly leaders. He attended a luncheon in his honour hosted by Foreign Minister Han Sung Joo, and later met with United Nations representatives in Korea. They briefed him on their programmes in the ROK, and also those developed jointly with the ROK and DPRK.

Tomorrow, the Secretary-General and his party leave Seoul by car for the DPRK, where he is expected around noon.

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The President of the General Assembly, Samuel R. Insanally (Guyana), summing up the 48th session prior to its suspension, pointed out to the press at Headquarters today that there had been "a happy coincidence of events that auger well for the future" since September. He cited as examples: the progressive developments in South Africa, with the promise of the introduction soon of a democratic, non-racial government; in the Middle East, the Palestine-Israeli accords which held the promise of peace and stability for "that long troubled region"; the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) coming "to some fruition"; Law of the Sea Treaty, with Guyana, as the 60th signatoree enabling it to enter into force next year, and progress towards the signing of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

With respect to upcoming work, he highlighted two priority areas. He said he would be establishing by the end of January the working group to look into the reform of the Security Council, "an idea whose time has come". He also hoped to be involved in the formulation of an agenda for development, once the Secretary-General issued his second report on the subject, perhaps some time in April. He said the Assembly Presidency had been given the role of conducting a wide examination of views of development, to find new ideas that went beyond traditional thinking, to help bring about economic development, "a sine qua non for peace in the world".

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The Security Council last night authorized the phased deployment of up to 50 additional military observers to the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). The interim mandate of UNOMIG is to maintain contacts with both sides to the conflict and military contingents of the Russian Federation. It is to monitor and report on the situation, particularly in relation to United Nations efforts to promote a political settlement, and to contribute to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 1 December by the Georgian and the Abkhaz sides.

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The Council, by unanimously adopting resolution 892 (1993), also noted the Secretary-General's intention to plan for a further expansion of UNOMIG, should the situation on the ground and the course of negotiations warrant it. It expressed its willingness to review the UNOMIG's mandate in the light of the Secretary-General's report due in late January, which should cover the specific activities UNOMIG would undertake, prospects for the mission and anticipated costs.

Also by the resolution, the Council urged the parties to comply fully with their commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding, and especially the commitment not to use force or the threat of force against each other during the negotiating period as set out in the main provisions of the cease-fire agreement of 27 July. It further urged the parties to create conditions for the voluntary safe and speedy return of refugees to their permanent residences and to facilitate humanitarian assistance to all victims of the conflict.

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Appropriations of $2,580,200,200 were approved for the United Nations regular budget for the 1994-1995 biennium by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) last night. It also approved draft resolutions that would have the Assembly authorize the Secretary-General to commit funds to finance 17 peace-keeping operations up to various dates in the first quarter of 1994.

With estimated income of $477,401,700, net expenditure for the biennium would be $2,112,798,500. Acting without a vote, the Committee approved five draft resolutions contained in its report to the Assembly, by which the Assembly would also appropriate:

-- $100 million for the biennium to establish the Working Capital Fund;
-- $25,099,000 for the International Computing Centre; and
-- $4,000,000 for the International Civilian Mission to Haiti for the period 1 January to 31 March 1994.

The Assembly would set the United Nations 1994 appropriations at $1,234,045,900, and set $1,198,902,550 as the assessment on Member States.

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At least 20 nations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East are suffering from serious food shortages that endanger millions of people, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) says in its latest analysis of the current world food situation. The FAO estimates that there are some 790 million chronically undernourished people in the developing world, including some 190 million children. In addition, some 2 billion people suffer from "hidden hunger" -- diet-related deficiency diseases that can retard mental and physical growth and lead to blindness and other serious disorders.

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The survey says that in 1993, world cereal production -- the basic diet in most nations -- dropped by 4 percent. This contributed to grave regional food shortages, forcing up prices on international markets. To avoid a further drawdown in the 'safety net' that global cereal stocks represent for world food security, the FAO says a minimum increase of 3 per cent in global cereal production is needed in 1994.

FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma says there is plenty of food to feed all of the world's 5.4 billion people, but the problem comes in distributing it to the starving and the malnourished. Wars, civil disturbances and economic chaos have further worsened the situation in eight nations that are already endangered by food shortages.

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